

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE  
ANIMAL CARE

**Pre-license Phone Discussion with Guinea Pig & Hamster Breeder/Dealer Applicant**  
**INTERNAL USE**

**Background and General Facility Questions**

- Have you been licensed with USDA-APHIS-Animal Care before?
- If so, how long ago were you licensed and for what timeframe?
  - Can you tell me what happened to cause this failure to renew your license?
  - Tell me about your past inspection reports – was anything cited, how were the problems fixed?
  - Were there any minor issues or concerns that your inspector discussed with you previously but did not put on the report?
  - What measures have you taken to fix those issues/concerns?
  - Do you understand that there are no “teachable moments” or minor issues for these pre-license inspections?
- How many guinea pigs (or hamsters) are currently under your control or at your facility?
- How many of these animals are intact females and capable of being bred?
- Are these all of the animals and locations you are using or intending to use for regulated purposes?
- Have you ever pled ‘no contest’ or have you ever been found to have violated any Federal, State, or local laws or regulations pertaining to animals? When?
- Tell me about your facility and how and where your animals are housed. What types of enclosures do you utilize?
  - Hamsters: Do you understand that all hamsters must be housed indoors?
  - Guinea pigs: Do you intend to house your guinea pigs indoors, outdoors, or both?
  - Do you understand that guinea pigs cannot be housed outdoors unless your facility is located in an appropriate climate, and prior approval has been obtained from the department?

**Animals Raised/Kept Inside the Home or Animals Cohabiting with Humans (Reference Animal Welfare Inspection Guide 4-22)**

- Do you keep or raise animals in your home?
- Do you have a special room or area in your home that is set aside specifically for the animals?
- If you do – do you understand that this animal area will need to meet the requirements of indoor housing including surfaces, ventilation, etc.? (need to refer to indoor housing facility questions at this point)
- Do you understand that the areas of the home that are available to the animals must be kept clean and safe to ensure their well- being? (Safety hazards – electrical cords, toxic plants, choking hazards, etc.)

- Do you understand that all areas housing animals and items associated with their care will need to be inspected?

**Indoor Facilities (not applicable to animals cohabiting with humans):**

- How is the facility heated and cooled and how is the temperature regulated?
- What is the high temperature in the summer and the low temperature in the winter inside the facility?
- Guinea pigs and hamsters must be housed in facilities where temperatures are maintained between 60-85 degrees – are you able to meet this requirement?
- How do you monitor the temperature and humidity levels?
- How is the facility ventilated? Doors, vents, windows, or some other auxiliary ventilation system?
- How is the facility lighted? Are there windows or skylights? What is the lighting schedule?
- Are interior surfaces including walls, floors, and ceilings impervious to moisture? What is used to make surfaces impervious to moisture?
- How often do you have maintenance issues that require repair or replacement? Are these issues currently fixed?

**Enclosures and Sanitation**

- What are the size of the cages? (length, width, and height)
- What materials are the cages made of?
- How often do you repair or replace cages?
- How many animals do you house per cage?
- Do you ever house more than that number?
- What kind of enrichment do you use? (toys, exercise wheels, chew sticks, etc.)
- How often do you clean and sanitize the enrichment toys?
- How often do you spot clean?
- What cleaning products do you use to clean the cages?
- What is the bedding and how often is it replaced or refreshed?
- How often do you do a complete bedding change and clean/sanitize the entire enclosure?
- Do you use hide boxes or tubing?
- How often are the hide boxes or tubing sanitized?
- How often do you change the bedding out of the hide box?
- How often do you clean and sanitize food/water receptacles?
- What type of water receptacles do you use?
  - For automated watering systems or water bottles, are the nipples specifically designed for the species to reduce flooding and/or

saturation of the bedding material near the watering station?

- For automated watering systems- how often do you flush/clean the lines? How often do you check to ensure each individual lixit is working?
- If you use ground watering dishes, are they shallow enough to prevent drowning hazards to young animals?

### **Veterinary and Health Issues**

- Who is your Attending Veterinarian (AV)?
- What experience does your AV have with guinea pigs/hamsters?
- Has your attending veterinarian visited recently? When?
- What is your formal arrangement?
- How have you given your AV appropriate authority to ensure that adequate care is provided to your animals?
- Do you have a current, written program of veterinary care (PVC) signed by your AV?
- Does the written PVC reflect what you actually do at your facility?
- Does the PVC cover routine medications, vaccinations, routine treatments including routine dental care, and when needed, euthanasia?
- Do you have any expired or unlabeled medications?
- How often do you observe each animal and what do you do when problems are discovered?
- How are problems recorded and communicated to your AV?
- How do you maintain medical records?
- How often do you check the teeth of your animals?
- What do you do to correct misaligned or overgrown incisor teeth?
- Do you offer any natural items (such as chew toys) to assist in the healthy development of teeth and prevent overgrowth?
- What method of euthanasia do you currently use? Has this been authorized by you AV and included in your written PVC?
  - For CO2 euthanasia onsite by licensee or employees- Do you have a CO2 Regulator? Do you have a CO2 flow meter? Which employees are authorized to conduct euthanasia? What type of training do employees receive? How do you confirm death after animals have been euthanized with CO2 (pulse, heartbeat, ocular reflex test)?

### **Identification and Records**

- How do you identify each animal?
- Are you familiar with APHIS Form 7019? (Record of animals on hand other than Dogs and Cats.) Form is not required but the information in 2.75 (b) (1) is.
- Have you documented the animals on hand with the correct information using this form or a separate form?

- Do you have all the acquisition information possible (name, address, USDA license number, driver's license number, etc.)?
  - If not – can you get at least directions to the seller's facility?
  - A phone number?
  - Some form of official identification?
- Are you familiar with APHIS Form 7020? (Record of Acquisition, Disposition, or Transport of Animals – Other than Dogs and Cats) – Form is not required but the information in 2.75 (b) (1) is. (Still need to ask this question but need to make clear this is not required for the PL.)

### **Feeding and Watering**

- Describe the current diet being utilized at your facility.
- Is the diet homemade or commercial?
- Has this diet (adult & baby formula) been approved by the AV?
- How do you maintain appropriate levels of Vitamin C in your guinea pig diet? Has this been approved by your AV?
- How is food stored? Is animal food separated from food intended for human consumption? Is animal food stored to prevent contamination (chemicals/cleaners/medications/or any other non-food items)?
- How are extra bags of food and extra bedding material stored?

### **Additional Topics**

- How do you manage pest control?
- How do you keep any vermin/rodent pest management items stored to eliminate accidentally exposing your guinea pig/hamster colonies?
- Do you harem breed? (Ok for guinea pig, not permitted for hamsters)
- Do you understand that all female hamsters and their young must be housed separately?
- What is your routine maintenance plan?
- Who will be caring for the animals, apart from you?
  - Have they had training in the care and husbandry of the animals and are they familiar with:
    - your PVC
    - your maintenance plans
    - any other procedures you have in place to ensure compliance
- Are there days and/or times during the week when you are unavailable for routine inspections?
- Is there someone else who you can authorize to be available for routine inspections?
- Do you understand the difference between regulated and unregulated activity?
- Do you understand that you cannot conduct regulated activity until you have a USDA license?
- Do you have your copy of the Animal Welfare Act ("the blue book" or the CD)?
- Have you read through the regulations and standards that apply to your facility and to your situation?

- Do you understand that you are legally responsible for complying with all of them?
- Are you aware that once the first pre-license inspection is conducted, you have 90 days to complete the inspection process with a maximum of three inspections?
  - It can take a week or two to schedule second and third inspection so please allow for that time to schedule inspections.
- When the first pre-license inspection is conducted (please allow at least 2-4 hours), some educational components and tools will be presented. Once that is completed, a physical inspection of the facility will be conducted.
- Do you understand that 100% compliance is required to pass and receive a license?
- Do you feel that you are ready for an inspection?
- Do you have any questions?